

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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R 061638Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3810

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMCONSUL BELFAST

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 10214

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PINT, UK (NI)

SUBJECT: UK OFFICIAL REVIEWS NI SITUATION

1. SUMMARY: UNDERSECRETARY IN WHITELOW'S OFFICE REMAINS DETERMINEDLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR POLITICAL SOLUTION IN NI. IN HIS VIEW, VARIOUS PARTIES ARE NOT AS FAR APART AS THEIR "NEGOTIATING POSITIONS" SUGGEST ON KEY ISSUES OF RUC, COUNCIL OF IRELAND, AND INTERMENT, AND WHITELOW STILL HAS ROOM FOR MANEUVER. PAISLEY'S WILLINGNESS TO ENGAGE IN POLITICAL PROCESS IS ENCOURAGING. TALKS, IN ANY EVENT, SHOULD SUCCEED OR FAIL BY NOVEMBER/DECEMBER, AT WHICH TIME WHITELOW WOULD PRESUMABLY BE FREE TO ASSUME DIFFERENT RESPONSIBILITIES IN HEATH CABINET. END SUMMARY.

2. IN GENERAL REVIEW OF NORTHERN IRELAND SITUATION WITH EMBASSY OFFICER SEPTEMBER 5, DENIS TREVELYAN, UNDER-SECRETARY OF NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE, MAINTAINED DETERMINED OPTIMISM ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR POLITICAL SOLUTION. WHITELOW WILL AGAIN MEET SEPARATELY WITH LEADERS OF VARIOUS PARTIES SEPTEMBER 10-12 IN EFFORT, AS "HONEST BROKER," TO GET THEM TALKING TO ONE ANOTHER. CONFIDENTIAL

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MAIN ISSUES ARE RUC, COUNCIL OF IRELAND, AND INTERN-

MENT, AND ON ALL THREE TREVELYAN FELT THAT DIFFERENCES AMONG THE PARTIES WERE NOWHERE NEAR AS PRONOUNCED AS THEIR "INITIAL NEGOTIATING POSITIONS" INDICATED AND THAT WHITELAW HAD SOME ROOM FOR MANEUVER IN CHARTING AN EVENTUALLY ACCEPTABLE MIDDLE COURSE.

3. TREVELYAN HAD LITTLE TO ADD TO ACCOUNT OF HEATH'S VISIT TO NORTHERN IRELAND GIVEN IN BELFAST 137. HE NOTED THAT HEATH HAD "LECTURED" POLITICAL LEADERS ON NEED TO MOVE MUCH FASTER IN FASHIONING NEW POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS, AND REMINDED THEM OF THE READINESS OF BOTH THE GOVERNMENT AND THE OPPOSITION TO RECALL PARLIAMENT ON SHORT NOTICE TO ENACT THE NECESSARY DEVOLUTION ORDER TRANSFERRING POWERS TO THE NI ASSEMBLY. HEATH ALSO DREW THEIR ATTENTION TO WHAT VARIOUS LABOR PARTY POLITICIANS HAD BEEN SAYING ABOUT THE LIMITS OF BRITISH POPULAR PATIENCE.

4. ON THIS LAST POINT, TREVELYAN EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT NI POLITICAL LEADERS FEEL UNDER PRESSURE TO MAKE SOME PROGRESS BEFORE THE LABOR PARTY'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE, OCTOBER 1-5. (COMMENT: THEY MAY IN FACT FEEL SUCH PRESSURE, BUT WE TEND TO DOUBT THEY HAVE MUCH CAUSE FOR CONCERN REGARDING THE CONFERENCE ITSELF. WITH SO MANY OTHER CONTENTIOUS ISSUES ALREADY ON THE AGENDA, THE LABOR PARTY SHOULD HAVE LITTLE INDUCEMENT TO LAUNCH A CONTROVERSIAL NEW POLICY ON NI AT THIS JUNCTURE.) IN ANY EVENT, TREVELYAN THINKS THAT MATTERS WILL HAVE TO COME TO A HEAD ONE WAY OR THE OTHER BY NOVEMBER/DECEMBER AT THE LATEST: THE POLITICAL PARTIES WILL EITHER HAVE REACHED AN EFFECTIVE ACCOMMODATION BY THEN OR THE LINES WILL HAVE HARDENED SO FAR AS TO PRECLUDE ANY SOLUTION UNDER CURRENT LEGISLATION.

5. TREVELYAN PROFESSED TO BE ENCOURAGED BY WHAT HE TERMED A CHANGE IN PAISLEY'S ATTITUDE SINCE JULY 31. AFTER JOINING WITH CRAIG TO REDUCE THE ASSEMBLY'S OPENING SESSION TO A SHAMBLES, PAISLEY HAS SINCE SHOWN A WILLINGNESS TO ENGAGE IN RATHER THAN SABOTAGE THE POLITICAL PROCESS. ON AUGUST 30-31 HE EVEN JOINED

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WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER PARTIES INCLUDING THE SDLP ON A STUDY JUNKET TO THE NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS IN THE HAGUE AND BRUSSELS AIMED AT DEVISING STANDING ORDERS FOR THE NI ASSEMBLY.

6. TREVELYAN'S REMARKS ABOUT COUNCIL OF IRELAND CLEARLY DID NOT REFLECT AWARENESS OF SERIOUSNESS OF IRISH UNHAPPINESS REPORTED DUBLIN 1193. REPUBLIC, HE SAID,

STANDS WHERE IT HAS ALWAYS STOOD ON THIS ISSUE, I.E.,
IT WANTS A TRIPARTITE CONFERENCE AND IS UNDER HARD
SDLP PRESSURE TO PUSH FOR SUCH A CONFERENCE BEFORE THE
FORMATION OF AN EXECUTIVE IN NI, BUT REPUBLIC IS ALSO
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 10214

"AWARE OF THE DIFFICULTIES." FOR HIS OWN PART,
TREVELYAN ARGUED FORCEFULLY AGAINST THE HOLDING OF A
TRIPARTITE CONFERENCE BEFORE THE FORMATION OF AN
EXECUTIVE. IF CRAIG PARTICIPATED, HE WOULD BE A
WHOLLY NEGATIVE AND DISRUPTIVE INFLUENCE, AND
FAULKNER'S ALREADY PRECARIOUS POSITION WOULD BE FURTHER
UNDERMINED. TREVELYAN DID NOT RULE OUT SOME COMPROMISE
ENTAILING PRELIMINARY TRIPARTITE TALKS, BUT THOUGHT IT
FAR BETTER TO ALLOW NEW EXECUTIVE TO ESTABLISH ITSELF
FIRMLY BEFORE SUBJECTING IT TO INEVITABLE STRAINS OF
PARTICIPATING IN TRIPARTITE COUNCIL OF IRELAND.

7. IN CONCLUSION, WHEN ASKED TO COMMENT ON PRESS
SPECULATION THAT DOMESTIC ECONOMIC SITUATION MIGHT
OBLIGE HEATH TO BRING WHITELAW BACK TO LONDON AS
PRIMARY SPOKESMAN FOR GOVERNMENT'S ANTI-INFLATION
PROGRAM, TREVELYAN COMMENTED -- ON STRICTLY PERSONAL
BASIS -- THAT IT WAS INCONCEIVABLE THAT WHITELAW COULD

BE MOVED DURING CURRENT CRITICAL STAGE OF POLITICAL
TALKS. HE CONCEDED, HOWEVER, THAT BY NOVEMBER OR SO,
WHEN TALKS HAD PRESUMABLY SUCCEEDED OR FAILED, A CHANGE
OF JOBS FOR WHITELAW MIGHT INDEED BE IN ORDER.

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